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CEPPS/IRI Final Quarterly Report

**MALAWI: STRENGTHENING POLITICAL PARTIES IN MALAWI
USAID Cooperative Agreement No. DGC-A-00-01-00004-00**

Project dates: October 1, 2003 – February 28, 2005
Total budget: \$800,000 Expenses to date: \$729,889

I. SUMMARY

The International Republican Institute's Strengthening Political Parties in Malawi program came to a close in the spring of 2005 after nearly a year and a half of working closely with Malawi's political parties to enable them to better aggregate citizen interests and ensure that government institutions serve those interests.

Over the life of the grant, IRI worked with ten political party partners: Alliance for Democracy (AFORD), Movement for Genuine Democratic Change (MGODE), Malawi Forum for Unity and Development (MAFUNDE), People's Transformation Party (PETRA), United Democratic Front (UDF), National Democratic Alliance (NDA), Malawi Congress Party (MCP), Republican Party (RP), National Unity Party (NUP), and People's Progressive Movement (PPM). IRI's post-election activities involved all of these parties, save NDA and NUP. Through workshops with the parties in the lead-up to the May 2004 elections, party poll watcher trainings, conflict resolution roundtables, campaign schools, party mentoring sessions, and university student question-and-answer forums, IRI hosted a variety of forums in which Malawi's political parties were able to strengthen their capacities both in a pre- and post-electoral environment.

While the original project was scheduled to conclude on October 31, 2004, IRI was granted an extension through February 28, 2005 to continue its programming. The Institute concluded its core program activities and closed its Lilongwe field office in December of 2004. Because of IRI's efficient financial management throughout the life of its Malawi grant, the Institute was left with some funds that could be reprogrammed for more activities. IRI thus spent the first calendar quarter of 2005 planning for a possible extension of its Malawi program. It was later determined that IRI had met its program objectives by completing all the activities from its original grant and would return the remaining funds to CEPPS.

II. BACKGROUND

The Malawian political system has historically been one of the more stable on the African continent, and one of the few that has not endured any international or domestic armed conflict. Following independence from the United Kingdom in 1964, Hastings Kamuzu Banda, leader of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), assumed the presidency and in 1970 appointed himself President for Life. However, Malawians voted overwhelmingly in favor of multi-party democracy and held the country's first national elections on May 17, 1994.

Bakili Muluzi, a former cabinet minister under Dr. Banda's regime and leader of the United Democratic Front (UDF), won Malawi's first national elections in 1994 handily. The elections were generally regarded as free and fair, and Dr. Muluzi impressed international donors by moving quickly to open the country's economy and draft a new constitution.

Dr. Muluzi won the country's second democratic elections on June 15, 1999 with a plurality of votes. His second term is generally regarded as significantly less sterling. Governmental corruption was considered widespread: as of April 2003 the cabinet had swelled to 46 ministers. And, in the midst of the country's worst famine in the past century, the government inexplicably sold its grain reserves without accounting for the profits. Dr. Muluzi's government has also done little to strengthen democratic institutions. Although fraud did not likely alter the outcome of the 1999 elections, observers believe fraudulent practices have occurred more frequently in the parliamentary elections occurring since.

Press freedom remains limited, and the state-owned – and patently pro-government – Malawi Broadcasting Corporation is the only radio station that operates reliably outside major urban areas. Dr. Muluzi launched a bid to amend the constitution to allow him the right to seek a third term and instituted a ban on public demonstrations against the proposed amendment. In one of the few victories for democratic institutions, the Malawian High Court, under the direction of its presidential-appointed judges, eventually struck down both the ban and the amendment.

Dr. Muluzi handpicked Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika, a Western-educated economist, to be the UDF candidate for the May 2004 elections. The nation's second largest opposition party, the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD), announced very late in the election season that it would endorse Mutharika's bid for the presidency, which gave Mutharika a distinct advantage.

Malawians went to the polls on May 20, 2004 and elected Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika to be the nation's second democratically-elected president with 36% of the vote. Dr. Muluzi stepped down, as promised, to allow his successor to take office. John Tembo of the MCP was the runner-up with 27% of the vote, and Mgwirizano Coalition leader Gwanda Chakuamba was a close third with 26%. National Democratic Alliance candidate Brown Mpinganjira took 9%, and independent candidate Justin Malewezi obtained a mere 3% of the vote. The voter turn-out was far lower than Malawi's 1999 elections; out of 5.7 million registered voters, only 3 million cast a ballot, which was a 52% turn-out.

Despite the success of UDF in the presidential election, they failed to win a majority in the parliament. This was a success for the opposition parties, many of whom formed their parties less than a year before the May 20th election. Since the elections, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has merged with the ruling UDF to join the Government of National Unity (GNU).

President Mutharika has thus far shown a commitment to limiting the size and waste within his administration. He has also begun addressing corruption through the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), which has been aggressively investigating members of the previous administration. Unlike his predecessor, he has given the impression that he is not interfering in the investigation process, although some have claimed that he is using the ACB to disrupt the internal workings of UDF.

Much attention in Malawi has now shifted to the growing rift between President Mutharika and former president Bakili Muluzi. Dr. Mutharika has instigated what has become a power struggle at the highest level of Malawian politics when he resigned from the UDF in February of this year, citing a rift that had formed within the party over his assault on corruption. Former president Muluzi has been outspoken against Mutharika's high-profile anti-corruption campaign. Dr. Mutharika has formed a new political party, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), which officially launched the first week in June, and is slowly starting to build its membership base among UDF defectors.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

After a comprehensive political assessment to Malawi in August 2003, the International Republican Institute opened an office in the capital of Lilongwe that October. Program activities were initiated by conducting a series of consultative meetings with the political parties and representatives of the Malawi electoral commission. In December 2003, IRI hosted a Party Primaries and Media Training workshop in Blantyre, where the parties and national electoral commission officials discussed party primaries and models for candidate selection from other countries. Additionally, representatives from the media met with the parties to develop an action plan as to how each group could be more communicative and understanding in their relations with one another.

The first several months of 2004 were packed with activities leading up to the May presidential and parliamentary elections. IRI signed Memoranda of Understandings (MOUs) with each political party partner prior to holding trainings and roundtables. IRI held three campaign schools over a period of three months focusing on coalition building, party structure, campaign methods, and communications in campaigns within parties. Three monthly conflict resolution roundtables were hosted where the parties worked to gain a better understanding the electoral process and legal avenues for electoral disputes, discussed relations between the Malawi political parties and religious organizations, and reviewed political party relations with the media.

In the lead-up to the May elections, IRI trained over 300 political party Poll Agent Monitors in each of the three main regions and in three of the most widely-spoken languages. The Institute

also trained women candidates and U.S. Embassy election observers on poll monitoring. IRI co-hosted Candidate Debate Trainings with the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) where a local acting troupe put on an interactive performance on proper ways for candidates to speak in public and where the Lilongwe Press Club presented on how to speak in public and conduct debates. Both IRI and NDI also held a joint session on the role of a Member of Parliament, specifically addressing the fine line a MP must play in representing his/her constituency while simultaneously representing his/her political party.

Thirty-six percent of Malawian voters elected Bingu wa Mutharika as the nation's second democratically-elected president on May 20th, 2004. Following the poll, IRI immediately launched post-election evaluations with the eight of its party partners and held consultations with the political party leaders. The Institute used these consultations to review the parties' proposed calendars in lead up to the early 2005 by-elections¹, their strategic party plans, to discuss outreach to potential party members, and to train on fundraising techniques.

Outreach to youth was one area all the parties cited as something they would like to expand, so IRI facilitated question-and-answer sessions between eight of the political parties and university students in the months following the election. These sessions were designed to provide the parties with a platform to reach out to young people who were interested in politics. Outreach to women and the recruitment of women candidates was another area where IRI focused its post-election activities. The Institute hosted a workshop for all of the parties entitled Women's Participation in Local Government where discussions ensued about the challenges facing women who want to run for office and about prospective women candidates for the local government elections.

IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

IRI focused its activities in Malawi with the main goal of increasing the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of the political parties. The Institute utilized the following four objectives to guide its program development and implementation:

1. Introduce more democratic practices in the decision making processes of their parties.

IRI held three trainings leading up to the May elections which specifically enhanced party decision making processes. The first of these trainings was a Campaign School focused on Coalition Building and Party Structure. It was attended by 19 party members from eight political parties (AFORDE, MAFUNDE, MCP, MCODE, NDA, PETRA, PPM, and UDF); of the 19 participants 10 were women (53%).

At this training on Coalition Building and Party Structure, participants adapted some of the suggestions of the guest speaker pertaining to decision-making in a coalition. The speaker advised participants to make decisions about the importance of agreeing on ministerial post-

¹ The by-elections in Malawi were originally scheduled for January 2005, were delayed due to a lack of funds to administer the poll, and, to date, have been indefinitely put on hold.

sharing between the parties in a coalition government before the elections in order to ensure that the parties do not go back on their word after the elections.

IRI also worked with political parties to evaluate their manifestos and constitutions; Institute staff and consultants reviewed and discussed each party's constitution, manifesto, internal strengths, and weaknesses with the parties. This work helped to provide a framework for the parties' reform actions. IRI's continued focus on strengthening the infrastructure of the parties and assisting them in their development of action plans to deal with internal reform issues aided the parties in their efforts to be more democratic in their internal decision making processes.

Percentage of target parties that design reform action plans:

IRI worked with its ten party partners in developing reform action plans through its Political Party Mentoring sessions. At the conclusion of IRI's program, 88% of the parties had designed reform action plans and 63% had implemented these plans.

Percentage of target parties who design voter outreach strategies:

All of the parties drafted plans for voter outreach strategies. Four (50%) of the parties with which IRI was working post-election (AFORD, MAFUNDE, MCODE, MCP, PETRA, PPM, RP and UDF) began implementing these strategies through IRI-sponsored forums and in independent grassroots activities.

Percentage of political parties that post-election draft new constitutions or make changes to existing ones:

IRI did extensive work on reviewing and recommending changes to the parties' constitutions. Of the eight party partners, five (63%) have made changes to their constitutions, recommended by IRI (MAFUNDE, MCODE, PETRA, PPM and RP). AFORD has taken the recommendations under review, but due to various memorandums of understandings (MOUs) with other parties and various factions within the party, they were not able to make substantive changes by the time IRI-Malawi completed its programming. UDF and MCP, two of the strongest parties, had not submitted to a review of their constitution due to the UDF's General Secretary's legal troubles and last-minute meeting cancellations by the MCP.

2. Better organize effective, voter-oriented campaigns

IRI held two campaign-oriented trainings prior to the elections. The focus of the first one was on basic campaign strategies, including: message development, budgeting, planning, and fundraising. This workshop was attended by 41 participants from all ten of IRI's political party partners; of the 41 participants 10 were women (24%). The second training was structured around how to communicate a party's message to the voters. This training was attended by 38 participants from all ten of IRI's political party partners; of the 38 participants 8 were women (21%). Through dialogues at IRI's Campaign School on Campaign Strategy, participants across the ten political parties discussed how best the parties can address the needs of voters and how parties can improve their advanced planning.

Percentage of target parties who design campaign plan and budget

With the exception of NUP, all of IRI's ten pre-election political party partners (90%) drafted versions of campaign plans and budgets. Along with the parties, IRI encouraged all of the individual candidates that attended trainings to draft their own plan and budget for their individual campaigns. 100% of party participants completed campaign plans as a result of IRI's training.

Percentage of target parties who implemented campaign plan and budget

It was far more difficult for some of the smaller parties (MAFUNDE, MCODE and PETRA) that were only contesting a small number of seats to implement their plans. Due to a lack of resources, in many cases the individual candidates were left to their own devices. Although they received help from their party, it was limited due to the lack of resources, media access, and party name recognition. Therefore, 50% of parties participating successfully implemented their plans.

The larger parties and the coalitions (MCP, NDA, PPM, RP and UDF) were most successful in implementing their campaign plans. MCP showed particular strength with their parliamentary success in the Central Region. The RP was also successful, although the decision of the Mgwirizano coalition members to contest against each other in some constituencies clearly had a negative impact on their overall results. UDF had the obvious advantage of being the ruling party and has the strongest infrastructure of all the parties as well as control of most media outlets. Although PPM contested a relatively small number of seats, they were the most successful of the smaller parties both in implementing their plan and in the final results.

In an effort to encourage more competitive elections, IRI recommended that AFORD conduct a review of their sitting candidates, assess their recognition factor by the constituency, and replace the candidates as necessary. This was an effort by IRI to ensure that party candidates are appropriately reflecting the needs of their constituencies, and, therefore, increasing their voter recognition, legitimacy, and popularity among voters. Using this recommendation, AFORD came to the conclusion that one candidate was not meeting these criteria; she was, subsequently, ejected from her by-election seat. IRI found that teaching parties to look inward and evaluate themselves and their candidates resulted in campaigns with stronger focus on the voter.

Additionally, an IRI-organized Women's Workshop appealed to the women of Malawi to bolster their political experience by running for local government positions. By holding a forum where Malawian women were able to dialogue with a politically active peer from another African country, the workshop participants learned about how local government positions will give them experience and provide a political support base which could help them, should they choose to run for higher office. The facilitator IRI brought from Uganda spoke about how women, in particular, can design campaigns which address the realities they all know and live every day at the grassroots level, and therefore, target specific voters.

3. Strengthen political parties' contributions to ensuring more credible, transparent and competitive elections

IRI conducted 10 political party poll monitor trainings in each of the three regions (2 in Blantyre, 2 in Zomba, 2 in Lilongwe, 2 in Kasungu and 2 in Mzuzu). A total of 266 party members of nine parties were trained; of the participants at the trainings, 170 were men (64%) and 96 were women (36%). The largest attendance at the trainings was in the Central region (108 participants, 41%), the Southern region had the second most participants (94 participants, 35%) followed by the North region (64 participants, 24%).

Number of target parties who train members in poll-watching

After the elections, IRI conducted a follow-up to the Poll Monitor training of trainers program to evaluate how many monitors were trained by the parties. Each of the ten parties conducted some kind of monitor trainings. Aside from UDF and RP, who trained and deployed monitors in all three regions, the smaller parties focused on the regions and constituencies where their candidates were contesting.

Participants of the poll monitor trainings felt that one of the other assets to their success as monitors on Election Day was the materials that IRI provided, specifically the Poll Monitor Training guide and one paged guide that were handed out. Based on the information of those participants we interviewed, accounting for the possibility of over-estimation on their part, the Institute estimates 3,000-6,000 party monitors across the country were trained using IRI materials.

Number of target parties who deploy party poll-watchers

Though IRI was unable to collect data in a scientific manner, the Institute is confident that a significant percentage of the ten parties IRI trained deployed party poll-watchers on Election Day.

All of the participants commented that the IRI trainings were a success and very insightful. In several instances, participants commented on the uniqueness of the IRI training; they knew more about the process of electoral monitoring than many of their counterparts from the international organizations that monitored the elections. Many people found that the most important part of the training was the section that described what were good and bad ballots. Others commented on how the knowledge they gained from the trainings gave them courage to stand up and contest irregularities in the voting process, which they said they would not have been able to do without the IRI trainings.

The Institute's ability to conduct the trainings in multiple languages further enabled the participants to understand the duties of poll monitors. Also, by traveling to specific areas and training them in the local languages, IRI reached out to as many trainers as possible on the ground.

Party members seemed to have benefited not only through the monitoring process, but also built their confidences and were able to include more of their party members. There is evidence that a number of parties or candidates are using reports from their monitors in the forthcoming court cases contesting the election results in certain constituencies.

Additionally, in an effort to ensure that the parties were participating in credible, transparent, and credible elections, IRI reviewed the constitutions of all ten of its partner parties. With the assistance of IRI staff members, the parties' constitutions were amended so that they meshed with Malawi's constitution. This was an instrumental step in improving the parties' organization, as they would otherwise be vulnerable to legal prosecution if their constitutions were technically illegal under the current national constitution.

IRI compiled a list of contact information for political parties in developing countries worldwide. In the hopes of creating linkages among parties with resources on a similar scale, IRI is working to connect Malawian parties with other parties in emerging democracies. The goal of these connections is for party leaders to discuss and share fundraising strategies and best practices. Because a solid financial support base is instrumental to a successful political campaign, it is crucial that the Malawian political parties increase their fundraising capacities. By encouraging the collaboration between like minded parties around the globe, IRI believes such linkages will strengthen the ability of Malawian parties to be more competitive in their own political system.

4. Initiate actions that seek to foster norms of peaceful, productive inter-party relations

IRI hosted three roundtables which focused on creating a non-confrontational atmosphere in which parties could discuss their disagreements between their parties and between other political entities. A total of 46 people participated in the three roundtables with all ten of IRI's pre-election party partners; of the 46 participants 3 were women (.07%). IRI invited representatives from the Malawi Electoral Commission, PAC-NICE, and Malawi Broadcast Corporation to these Conflict Resolution roundtables. By engaging participants in cross-party exercises such as non-partisan break-out groups and role playing during trainings, IRI worked to create a cooperative environment in which different political parties can operate.

Additionally, in coordination with NDI-Malawi, IRI conducted two days of candidate debate training, which included a total of 72 participants; of these participants, 55 were from IRI's ten political party partners and 17 were independent candidates. The purpose of the debate training was to prepare the candidates to participate in the NDI-sponsored Citizen Advocacy Forums, a town hall format of debates. The trainings conducted by IRI promoted an issue-based and non-confrontational debate technique. The participants were reminded of the importance of the issues to voters and encouraged not to engage in negative or accusatory behavior toward the other candidates. As a result, the debates were a success and there was limited deviation from the issues presented at each of the forums.

While bringing the parties together for trainings, IRI also encouraged them to find common ground to work together. And, as a result of one such training, a number of parties joined together to issue a statement of approbation relating to the activities and statements emanating from the religious groups of political bias during the campaign period. The parties were also

brought together in their coalitions during the trainings to develop action plans, communication plans, coalition messages, and other important campaign initiatives.

IRI has, through the party mentoring and university forums, further strengthened the capacity of Malawi's political parties to engage in the political process. The university forums provided the opportunity for parties to articulate their platforms to university students, and defend those same platforms when required. These forums were very popular with the university students because they provided an environment in which the students could ask questions directly of the parties; IRI's party partners also liked these forums because they can easily be replicated by parties with limited resources who want to increase their visibility among younger people.

The mentoring program has also strengthened Malawi's political parties by providing participating political parties with technical assistance as they formulate documents such as a party constitution and by laws. Engaging parties *after* the election on the importance of these documents strengthens not only the party, but Malawi's democracy writ large.

V. EVALUATION

The International Republican Institute was very pleased with the results of its Strengthening Political Parties in Malawi program. Feedback received on the substance and impact of IRI's programming from the USAID Mission in Lilongwe was positive and helpful as the Institute found other ways to engage the parties on issues they themselves had highlighted as areas of need.

From its experience in Malawi, IRI found many programming aspects that it plans to replicate in other CEPPS programs in Africa. For instance, the Institute plans to use its Poll Agent Trainer manual as a model, hold university student forums with political parties, and provide post-election consultative mentoring sessions in a one-on-one fashion with parties in multiple other CEPPS/IRI programs in Africa.

Additionally, IRI felt confident that its USAID-approved Performance Monitoring Plan (PMP) in Malawi was well-developed; it proved to be a useful guide for the Institute as the Malawi program was implemented. IRI's Malawi PMP has already been used as a model for IRI's CEPPS program in Sudan; IRI's Sudan staff found the Malawi PMP to be an excellent model that was substantive and realistic for implementation and evaluation.

Had IRI continued its programming after December 2004, the Institute would have been able to continue with its successful trainings and consultations. While IRI was happy with the quality of its programming up until that point, not continuing programming into the early part of 2005 is one of the primary drawbacks of the Institute's Malawi program. However, IRI feels overall as though all four objectives were not only met, but surpassed beyond expectation.